

Université de Montréal

**Gender, Globalization and Beyond in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies***

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## Résumé

Ce mémoire explore deux concepts majeurs : la mondialisation et la diaspora et leur impact sur la représentation des femmes dans la série de nouvelles *The Interpreter of Maladies* de Jhumpa Lahiri et dans le roman *Tropic of Orange* de Karen Tei Yamashita. Dans le premier chapitre, en s'appuyant sur la théorie de Vijay Mishra, *Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*, ce mémoire examinera l'état diasporique de Mrs. Sen à travers la notion de « deuil impossible ». Mrs. Sen sera juxtaposée à deux autres personnages féminins dans le but de démontrer que la mobilité et le passage des frontières n'affectent pas toutes les femmes de la même façon, surtout lorsqu'elles viennent de classes et de milieux sociaux différents. De plus, la condition de Mrs. Sen sera également comparée à celle de son mari pour soutenir que l'impact de l'immigration est plus bénéfique à lui qu'à elle. Ce mémoire repense donc certaines des raisons qui poussent les gens à migrer à travers le monde, ainsi qu'aux impacts de cette migration sur les individus, en particulier les femmes dont le déplacement limite souvent la mobilité, la liberté et l'indépendance. Dans le second chapitre, la théorie de Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders*, sera utilisée pour souligner les différences entre la femme occidentale et la femme dite du tiers monde. En outre, l'essai de Mohanty *Under Western Eyes' Revisited*, qui condamne les effets néfastes du capitalisme et de la mondialisation pour promouvoir un projet social basé sur la solidarité, sera utilisé pour étudier la description d'Emi et de Rafaela, deux personnages centraux du roman de Yamashita, et ce, dans le contexte de la mondialisation et de ses opérations déviantes. C'est en tenant compte des modes opérationnels criminels et criminisalisant du capitalisme que la

mondialisation sera analysée, et ce, à travers la complicité et la résistance des personnages féminins de Yamashita face au capitalisme global.

**Mots-clés :** mondialisation, diaspora, genre, frontières, mobilité, mondialisation déviante, féminisme, solidarité.

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores two major concepts: globalization and diaspora and their impact on the literary representation of women in Jhumpa Lahiri's collection of short stories *The Interpreter of Maladies* and Karen Tei Yamashita's novel *Tropic of Orange*. In the first chapter, using Vijay Mishra's theory on the *Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*, the thesis examines the diasporic state of Mrs. Sen through Mishra's notion of "impossible mourning". I juxtapose Mrs. Sen's character to two other female characters to argue that mobility and crossing borders do not affect all women equally, especially if they come from different social class and caste backgrounds. In addition, I compare Mrs. Sen's diasporic condition to her husband's to contend that the impact of immigration is more beneficial to him than her. This thesis, hence, rethinks some of the reasons why people migrate across the world and its various impacts on individuals, especially women whose displacement often curtails rather than expands their mobility, freedom and independence. In the second chapter, therefore, I use Chandra Talpade Mohanty's *Feminism without Borders* to highlight the difference between Western women and so-called Third World women. Furthermore, using Mohanty's essay "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited," which condemns the detrimental effects of capitalism and globalization and promotes an anti-capitalist and anti-global project based on solidarity, I study the characterization of Emi and Rafaela, two central characters of Yamashita's novel, within the context of globalization and its deviant operations. Referring to the criminal and criminalizing operative modes of global capitalism, including organ and sex trafficking, deviant globalization is a critical concept in this thesis through which I read

Yamashita's novel and its female characters' complicity with and resistance to global capitalism.

**Keywords:** Globalization, diaspora, gender, borders, mobility, deviant globalization, feminism, solidarity

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*To Family and friends across the world*



## Introduction

My second piece of advice is to stay global. As the world continues to change and we become more connected to each other, globalization will bring both benefits and disruptions to our lives. But either way, it's here, and it's not going away

— Barack Obama, Speech (4)

## **Theoretical Framework:**

In this thesis, I explore the concept of globalization<sup>1</sup> as a phenomenon that has changed the political, economic and social landscape of the world with its emergence in the late twentieth century and that is still overwhelmingly omnipresent and empowered in our present time. Evidently, our lives are ruled and defined with what globalization has to offer. Be it the transnational online job we have or the transcontinental online course we take, the virtual network we create on a daily basis through social media or staying informed with current events, the perks of globalization solidify our attachment to the phenomenon. My main goal, however, is to examine the detrimental costs of its advantages. Globalization, I will argue, is a complicated concept that teeters between the benefits, and complications. When examining the complexities of the phenomenon, one ought to raise the following questions: is globalization beneficial to all individuals around the world equally? If not, who benefits from it, and at whose expense? Moreover, can we speak of a global democracy? If yes, who is in control of maintaining a global justice and how? I explore these inquiries through Nils

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<sup>1</sup> Globalization, a primarily economic process based on globalizing local and national economies, is a capitalist expansion that entails the easy mobility of goods, services, people and ideas across the world.

Gilman, Jesse Goldhammer, and Steven Weber's examination of the matter in their book *Deviant Globalization: Black Market Economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The book, as Craig Calhoun puts it, "Shows the dark side of global trade, the illicit flows, black markets, and trafficking in drugs and human bodies that are as much a part of the new world disorders as multinational corporations and instant financial transfers" (300).

Globalization and its deviant side is a broad subject and in order to grasp its complexity, I narrow it down by linking the phenomenon to gender issues. In my thesis, I shed light on the status of women within this context. I argue that, globalization, based on mobility, does not affect men and women equally especially in the case of some female diasporas who travel with their husbands to new lands where they feel suffocated in a new environment. Moreover, I also contend that globalization does not affect women equally when they do not come from the same social class or caste. More specifically, I examine the notion of the female diaspora and its relationship to mobility, immobility, class, caste and patriarchy. I formulate my argumentative flow on the basis of Vijay Mishra's book *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*. Using a theoretical framework based on psychology, Mishra studies the traumatic state of diasporas: a group of people in displacement who are not able to mourn the loss of home and therefore their nostalgic memory acts like an open wound. If mobility and distance from home generate feeling of exclusion, how do we read the marginalization of individuals within their own home? I argue, that individuals and especially women can be seen as diasporas within their homeland. Here, I highlight the importance of class and caste in distinguishing between individuals within the same geographical space.

Social class is determined by wealth. Capitalism, therefore, is a key factor in regulating social statuses. It is in these differences, I contend, that we are able to see the unequal impact of globalization on women. I study these differences through Chandra Tolpade Mohanty's book *Feminism without Borders*. In "Under Western Eyes", Mohanty studies the stereotypical image imposed on Third World Women by Western women. She advocates for the importance of difference and diversity for she believes that it is in accepting each other's dissimilarity that people, especially women are brought together in solidarity. In "Under Western Eyes 'Revisited'", Mohanty underlines this solidarity against the deviant side of globalization that is mostly beneficial to capitalist multinational corporations. Based on Mohanty's anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-global project of solidarity, I contend that in the age of a deviant globalization, solidarity is fundamental regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or sexuality. Individuals around the world who are not protected and empowered by wealth and capital are exposed to criminal acts such as kidnapping for organ and sex trafficking. These corrupted organizations operate through open borders which have globalized danger by creating a global market that links countries in a network based on a supply-demand relationship.

Lastly, I argue that in spite of their differences, individuals are brought together in solidarity to resist against the deviant side of globalization and the criminal acts of capitalist multinational organizations and corporations. I examine the importance of resistance through Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's book *Empire* and its sequel *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. The Multitude is a resisting force against global corruption and inequality. In examining resistance, we notice that globalization is a complex and multifaceted concept. In a sense, its deviant side is both a consequence of corruption and also a reaction to corruption. Basically, dominant nations enforce their economic power through

deviant means such as the black market of organs and drugs on poorer nations who comply as an attempt to overcome poverty. This claim is adopted by Nils Gilman, Jesse Goldhammer, and Steven Weber who announce that deviant globalization has changed the economic landscape in many poor countries. Therefore, some nation states resist through these criminal organizations. I challenge this bold statement through the solutions provided by Michael Hardt and Negri. They state that resisting against global inequality does not imply the enforcement of the sovereignty of nation states. The solution must stay at a global level because globalization as a phenomenon is not the issue. On the contrary, the problems lie in the global deviant ways through which capitalism operates.

### **Methodological Framework:**

My thesis analyzes the literary representation of women living under the pressures of globalization in Jhumpa Lahiri's collection of short stories *The Interpreter of Maladies* and Karen Tei Yamashita's novel *Tropic of Orange*.

The first chapter, hence, rethinks some of the reasons for why people migrate across the world and its various impacts on individuals, especially women. I use Vijay Mishra's theory on the diasporic impossible mourning to study Mrs. Sen's diasporic state within a global context. I explain Eliot's mother's situation through Heather Wyatt-Nichol's *The Enduring Myth of the American Dream: Mobility, Marginalization, and Hope* to further demonstrate the myths of the American dream and the failure of its promises. I argue that the clash between expectation and reality manifests itself in the tension and the division between Mrs. Sen and Eliot's mother. She questions Mrs. Sen's immigration to the U.S. especially when she discovers that the latter used to have a comfortable life in India. I compare Mrs. Sen's past life in India to Bibi's situation in order to conclude that because both women belong to different

castes, their perception of home is different from one another. Therefore, regardless of geography, individuals are distinguished based on class and capitalism which creates social division. Globalization, I explain, is a vehicle through which transnational corporations operate at the expense of individuals in nation states and multicultural states.

The second chapter examines the ways transnational capitalism operates through globalization and highlights its impact on women and individuals in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*. In this part, I rely on Chandra Talpade Mohanty's *Feminism without Borders* to study the difference between two female protagonists in the novel: Emi and Rafaela. I apply Mohanty's distinction between Western women and Third World women to differentiate between both women. This distinction is crucial and fundamental to avoid clichés and stereotypes that only lead to overgeneralizations and thus division. In the midst of their difference, however, the two women meet on a common platform where they have to face the danger of transnational organ and drug trafficking. The latter operates within a global frame that is regulated and legalized by transnational world trades such as NAFTA<sup>2</sup>. Emi and Rafaela's resistance against these organizations brings both women together in an act of solidarity. It is in solidarity that Mohanty constructs her anti-racist, anti-capital and anti-global project. Mohanty's project revisits the differences between Western women and Third World women to bring them together in solidarity against the dangers of the deviant side of globalization. Furthermore, I study the characterization of another resisting character in the

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<sup>2</sup> North American Free Trade Agreement; is an agreement signed by Canada, Mexico and the U.S. that came into effect in 1994. Its purpose is to create "one of the World's largest free trade zones and laying foundations for strong economic growth and rising prosperity" for the three signing countries.

novel: Manzanar Murakami. He represents the riot and the revolt against a corrupted system and he further illustrates the fact that the danger of such organizations touches all individuals regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or age. Individuals, who are protected, however, are those who belong to high social class by owning capital and money. In this part, I examine the resistance through Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's *Empire* and their notion of the "Multitude", which acts as a resisting force against a global system of power.

**Female Diaspora and What Has Globalization Got to Do with It in Jhumpa Lahiri's  
*Interpreter of Maladies***

“And the Further they go, the more  
they’ll remember”

—Rohinton Mistry, *Swimming  
Lessons and Other Stories* from  
Firozha Baag (87)

The following chapter analyzes two short stories, “Mrs. Sen” and “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar”, from Jhumpa Lahiri’s collection of short stories *The Interpreter of Maladies* in which I focus on the lives of three female characters: Eliot’s mother living in the United States, Bibi Haldar living in India and Mrs. Sen who has recently moved from India to the U.S with her husband. My main goal here is to underline the differences between the three women based on geography and social class. First, I wish to examine the concept of diaspora within the context of globalization through the psychological state of Mrs. Sen. Second, I compare Mrs. Sen’s India to Bibi’s to rethink the notion of home in regards to mobility and caste. Third, I study the uneven impact of mobility on people coming from different social classes and on women in comparison to men. Lastly, I rethink the promises of mobility and globalization through the situation of Eliot’s mother.

Diaspora, as Paul Gilroy puts it, is “an ancient word” (207) that has a religious significance since it is first used in the bible to “describe the Jews living in exile from the

homeland of Palestine”<sup>3</sup> (Brazier and Mannur 1). Etymologically, it is derived from the Greek *diasperien* which means to scatter. The Jews, therefore, were scattered across the world when they left their homeland. Diaspora, thus, in the words of Jana Evans and Anita Mannur, “suggests a dislocation from the nation-states or geographical location of origin and relocation in one or more nation-states, territories, or countries (1). In other words, diasporic subjects are those individuals who are displaced from their homeland and are relocated in a new land. In *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*, Vijay Mishra explores the notion of diaspora and theorizes it. He distinguishes between the old and the new Indian diaspora in studying the “historical conditions that produced them” (3). While subjects of the old diaspora migrated to colonies such as Fiji, South Africa, Malaysia, Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana, where they were discriminated against by other colonized people because of issues over “power and privilege” (3), the new diaspora “surfaces precisely at the moment of (post) modern ascendancy; it comes with globalization and hypermobility”<sup>4</sup> (3). The new diaspora, hence, seems to be a celebration of mobility and the mainstream globalization that

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<sup>3</sup> See “Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity”, an essay by Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin. Critical of Zionist ideology, they explore the Jewish identity outside of geography. Instead they examine the ways a Jewish identity can be constructed based on generational links (87).

<sup>4</sup> Mishra relates the “new” diaspora to the rise of globalization. In a borderless world, individuals cross borders willingly with the hope of changing their living conditions. Quoting M.G. Vassanji from his novel *In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, Mishra states that “it was poverty at home that pushed them [Indians] to cross the ocean [...] but surely there’s that wanderlust first, that itch in the sole, that hankering in the soul that puffs out the sails for a journey into the totally unknown” (17). The uneven economic and political conditions across the globe, therefore, are one of the main reasons that produce the new diaspora.



shrinks the world into a “global village”<sup>5</sup>. The reason behind this distinction is to highlight the differences between diasporas and to examine each type separately without falling into over generalizations. In the history of the Indian diaspora, according to Mishra, there are three types of diasporic subjects. The old diaspora refers to the Indian indentured <sup>6</sup>workers. The new diaspora refers to Indians living in developed countries such as the U.S. The third diaspora refers to individuals who migrated from India to African colonies and then migrated again to Western developed countries. This diaspora is “twice displaced” (3) as he states.

In a presumably borderless world, therefore, boundaries are blurred and due to hypermobility, the task to separate and distinguish one group of diaspora from another is more challenging since the “old has become part of the new through re-migration such as Fiji-Indians to Vancouver or Trinidadian- Indians to Toronto (3). One aspect, however, that theorists of diaspora such as Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai and others agree upon is that, as Mishra puts it, “ all diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way” (1). In this context, Vijay Mishra studies the aspects and the reasons behind the unhappy state of diasporic subjects through his theory of a ‘diasporic imaginary’<sup>7</sup> modeled on the notion of an

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<sup>5</sup> “Global village” is a phrase coined by Marshall McLuhan to refer to a world that is “shrunk” due to modern means of communication and networking.

<sup>6</sup> The Indian indenture system is based on indenture. The latter is a contract that legalized the debt bondage of 3.5 million Indians who were transported to colonies that belonged to European powers.

<sup>7</sup> “Diasporic imaginary” is a concept coined by Vijay Mishra in his book *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*. The concept refers to individuals who define themselves as a group in displacement and deterritorialization, be it consciously or

impossible mourning<sup>8</sup>. “The diasporic imaginary”, Mishra writes, “is a term use[d] to refer to any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or through self-evident or implied political coercion , as a group that lives in displacement” (14). In the following part, I study the psychological state of Mrs. Sen through Mishra’s theory of ‘diaporic imaginary’ to see if her diasporic state makes of her a melancholic woman or not.

### **‘Diasporic Imaginary’, Real or Imaginary?**

“Mrs. Sen”, the sixth short story in Jhumpa Lahiri’s collection *The Interpreter of Maladies* narrates the story of a newly arrived immigrant who moved from India to the U.S. with her husband, a university professor of mathematics. Mrs. Sen, who is referred to as the professor’s wife, struggles with adjusting to her new environment. She declares: “Here in this place where Mr. Sen has brought me, I cannot sometimes sleep in so much silence” (63). The study of Mrs. Sen’s state reveals her to be torn between her Indian culture and the necessity of assimilating to the new American culture. Caught in an in-between state, Mrs. Sen is unable to forget the past and accept the present. She is, as Vijay Mishra puts it, one of the diasporas that are “precariously lodged within an episteme of real or imagined displacements, self-imposed sense of exile [...] haunted by specters, by ghosts arising from within that encourage irredentist or separatist movements” (1). In other words, she lives in distress because she is

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unconsciously. The diasporic imaginary according to Mishra is a “condition of impossible mourning that transforms mourning into melancholia” (9).

<sup>8</sup> Quoting Derrida, Vijay Mishra writes about the impossible mourning in the context of Diaspora. The act of mourning can only be defined as an absence, the death and the disappearance of the mourned. The reappearance of the dead, the specter, however, makes the act of mourning impossible. Diasporic memory of a lost home acts as an open wound from the past that leaves the diasporic subject in distress, suffering from melancholy and even trauma.

struggling to accept her new life in the U.S. For this reason, she is unable to reach closure which leaves her suspended between two different lands and two different times.

In “Affect, History, and The Ironies of Community and Solidarity in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies”, Susan Muchshima Moynihan includes Madhuparna Mitra in a debate concerning the reasons and the effects of Mrs. Sen’s nostalgia for India. Mitra asks, “at what point does the desire to preserve one’s native culture become counterproductive or even destructive?” and thinks that “Mrs. Sen makes very little effort to adapt to her new environment, and her single-minded devotion to replicating traditional cuisine is a sign of her deep estrangement from American culture” (186). Moynihan, on the other hand, disagrees with Mitra’s claim, saying that she “find[s] troubling Mitra’s emphasis on success or failure, determining Mrs. Sen ‘unable to forge a hyphenated identity’ and unwilling to make the ‘assimilative compromises necessary’” (105). The debate here seems to revolve around the failure or success of hyphenated identities *vis-à-vis* American culture. Mrs. Sen, however, is not a hyphenated identity. Evidently, she identifies as an Indian woman, displaced from home, who refuses to let go of her cultural heritage. According to Mitra, Mrs. Sen’s nostalgia threatens her ability to construct a home in the U.S. I argue that Mrs. Sen’s reminiscence of India is a choice. As Vijay Mishra claims, the diasporic subject refuses to accept the loss of their homeland. “The subject”, he states, “does not want to replace [home] because to do so would taint the purity of the object lost [...] in the context of diasporas we need to ask, when the subject is cured? Does he/she want to be cured?” (9). Mrs. Sen exemplifies the diasporic subject who clings to memory and refuses to let go of the past. Even “Eliot understood that when Mrs. Sen said home she meant India not the apartment where she sat chopping

vegetables” (63). Thereby, the choice of refusing to let go of the lost object makes the process of mourning impossible.

Mrs. Sen’s impossible mourning can be explained by the daily comparison she makes between “home” and “this place” through memories and nostalgia. Mishra molds his version of the diasporic impossible mourning on Jacques Derrida and Sigmund Freud’s theories on mourning. The act of mourning according to Freud is “regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or the loss of some abstraction which has taken place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal and so on” (251-2). In Mrs. Sen’s condition, she is mourning the loss of her homeland. According to Derrida, nevertheless, mourning is impossible. In *memoire for Paul de Man*, he examines the impossible mourning in the following quotation:

What is an impossible mourning? What does it tell us, this impossible mourning, about an essence of memory [of amnesia, of remembrance]? And as it concerns the other in us...where is the most unjust betrayal? Is the most distressing, or even the most deadly infidelity that of a *possible mourning* which would interiorize within us the image, the idol, or the ideal of the other who is dead and lives only in us? [...] Against impossible mourning can there be true mourning?

(31)

The impossible mourning, thus, is linked to the reappearance of the dead whether it is a person or an idea that keeps coming back through memory. After loss, the mourned is leveled to the “image of the idol or the ideal [...] who is dead and lives only in us” (31). The resurrection of the dead, hereafter, makes the act of mourning impossible. Applying Derrida’s philosophy on diasporic subjects, Vijay Mishra announces that “Since the truth of mourning never arrives all that is left is memory, which, of course, can only be structured as a trope of absence, a ghostly

trope of prosopopeia (the mode of personification that implies an absent speaker), by which memory (which like stone is silent) is given a voice” (8). It is through memory, thereby, that diasporic subjects are stuck in an impossible mourning.

The result of this impossible mourning, hence, according to Mishra leads to melancholia and even trauma in a condition he calls “diasporic imaginary”. He states:

I want to suggest that the diasporic imaginary is a condition (and imaginary is the key concept here) of an impossible mourning that transforms mourning into melancholia. In the imaginary of diaporas both mourning and melancholia persist, sometimes in intensely contradictory ways at the level of the social. In fact, if we examine the characteristics of mourning and melancholia more closely in Freud’s essay, we are struck by the match between a diaspora’s memory of homeland (which defies representation) and the nature of the lost object that forms the basis of melancholia. (9)

In the quote above, Mishra suggests that there is an overlap between Freud’s theory of melancholia that is caused by the loss of a loved object, idea or a person and diaspora’s melancholia that is based on the impossible mourning of a lost homeland. In order to understand this statement, one must study the definition of melancholia. According to Freud, the latter “behaves like an open wound that empties the ego until it is totally impoverished” (262). Melancholia, therefore, is a serious condition that can lead the depressed melancholic subject to thinking about committing suicide. If we look closely at Mrs. Sen’s state we wonder, however, if she is even melancholic.

Different from the Greek philosophers that understood the notion of melancholia through humoral pathology and female biology<sup>9</sup>, Sigmund Freud looks at the condition from a psychological point of view. He states that “melancholia, whose definition fluctuates even in descriptive psychiatry, takes on various clinical forms” (243). Put simply, it is hard to pin down melancholia to a simple definition. Regardless, he studies the condition in relation to the condition of mourning. “The correlation of melancholia and mourning”, announces Freud, “seems justified by the general picture of the two conditions” (243). In other words, mourning and melancholia can be the reaction to the loss of a loved object. The difference between the two conditions, however, is that while in mourning the subject focuses on the external world and how it is impoverished after the lost object, in melancholia, the subject’s ego is absorbed until it is impoverished because he or she is unable to fathom the impact of the lost object on them internally. This is what Freud refers to as the “unknown loss” and as long as this feeling stays unknown, the melancholic state clings onto the subject like an open wound. It is in this internal and psychological turbulence that the melancholic subject loses all interest in living.

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<sup>9</sup> See Julia Kristeva’s *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*. In “Psychoanalysis— A Counter depressant”, Kristeva sheds light on the historical background of the notion of melancholia. She goes back to the Greek philosophers who linked melancholy to humoral pathology and female biology. Hippocrates, known as the “Father of Modern Medicine”, linked human health to “humorism” (The four humours: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile). According to Hippocrates, good health is the result of a perfect balance between the four humors. Melancholia, thus, according to the Greek philosopher is linked to the black bile: *melaina chole*. “Relying on the Hippocratic notions of four humors and temperaments”, says Kristeva, “Aristotle breaks new ground by removing melancholia from pathology and locating it in nature but also and mainly by having it ensue from heat” (11). Aristotle linked melancholia to the female biology.

The symptoms of a serious case of melancholia which is defined now as a major depressive disorder (MDD) listed by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) are “persistent feelings of extreme sadness for a long period of time, loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyable, feelings of self-loathing because of guilt [...] thinking or talking about death or suicide, suicide attempts”. In addition, in “Mourning and Melancholia”, Sigmund Freud differentiates between melancholy and mourning by announcing that “the distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectations of punishment (244). If we rethink the reading of Mrs. Sen’s condition as ‘diasporic imaginary’ through these melancholic symptoms we notice that classifying her as a melancholic subject because of an impossible mourning over the loss of India is an exaggerated statement.

Mrs. Sen is not melancholic because she is trying to carry on with her daily life in spite of her uncomfortable displacement from her homeland. In other words, Mrs. Sen is not lost in a self-degrading state where she would feel guilty and therefore unworthy of living. Thinking about death or committing suicide, as I have mentioned before, are major symptoms in distinguishing the melancholic subject and Mrs. Sen is not suicidal. In fact, Mrs. Sen, a childless woman, chooses to babysit for Eliot as an attempt to get busy in her uneventful life in the U.S. She looks for hope and happiness in the smallest details such as going to the beach and taking pictures for souvenirs with her husband Mr. Sen. Evidently, Mrs. Sen is not happy with her new situation in the United States but she is not melancholic to a degree that she thinks of death or committing suicide. At this point, we start to question the issues that Mrs.

Sen is facing in her new environment. What are they? Are they really too grave to lead to a depression or are they over exaggerated?

In her new environment, Mrs. Sen suffers from loneliness due to a distanced relationship with her husband and immobility. The fact that she is introduced in the story as belonging to her husband rather than having an independent identity of her own proves Mrs. Sen to be trapped in a marriage in which she cannot make decisions, especially because she comes from a culture where many childless wives are either abused or pitied and in both cases the wife would always be inferior to her husband. This explains the distance between Mrs. and Mr. Sen. Through Eliot's eyes the reader sees that "a few minutes later Mr. Sen would arrive, patting Eliot on the head but not kissing Mrs. Sen" (67). The second reason behind Mrs. Sen unhappy life in the U.S. is immobility for she is unable to drive and therefore unable to go out of the apartment often. Ironically, on a global level, Mrs. Sen and other immigrants illustrate the dynamism of a borderless world yet it seems that crossing geographical borders creates new type of borders; psychological and emotional that is. Being immobile and therefore dependent all the time on her husband to drive her to the market or anywhereelse deepens in her the sense of inutility and loneliness.

One cannot deny the distress that Mrs. Sen suffers from. She is alienated in her new environment which enhances her nostalgia for home. On a daily basis, she compares her present to her past and it is in the comparison that the reader notices her idealization of India. One might question, however, the gravity of Mrs. Sen's problems. Are they not exaggerated? Consequently, does she not over idealize India? In order to explore these questions, I compare Mrs. Sen's situation to Bibi Haldar's, the female protagonist of Lahiri's short story "The



Treatment of Bibi Halдар”. In this comparison, we notice the different perception of India from the point of view of two women that come from different castes.

### **India between Idealization and Reality:**

The reader notices Mrs. Sen’s exaggerated issues when she is metaphorically compared to the *sati*<sup>10</sup>. When Eliot takes a picture of Mrs. and Mr. Sen, he remarks that “They didn’t hold hands or put their arms around each other’s waists. Both smiled with their mouths closed, squinting into the wind, Mrs. Sen’s red sari leaping like flames under her coat (69). The flames here are a metaphorical reference to the *sati*, meaning literally the good wife, who is burning under the flames as it is her duty towards her husband and religion according to Hinduism. Eleanor Ross explores the notion of the *sati* and announces that the discourses on [it] are rife with controversy (385). Ross begins her research by analyzing the influential essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who argues that the British abolition of the rite of the *sati* in India “has been generally understood as a case of White men saving brown women from brown men” (93). This statement has been criticized by many scholars such as Katherin Mayo, Lata Mani and others who argue that the British abolition of *sati* is totally political. Mayo states that “the British administration of India, be it good, bad, or indifferent, has nothing whatever to do with conditions of India” (78). Stephen Morton adds to Mayo and Mani by linking the abolition of the *sati* to the justifications of colonialism. He argues that “by representing *sati* as a barbaric practice, the British were thus able to justify imperialism as a civilizing mission in which [...] they were rescuing Indian women from the

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<sup>10</sup> The Indian rite of *sati* or as it known in English as “the burning widow” is a Hindu funeral custom where a widow immolates herself shortly after her husband’s death.

reprehensible practices of a traditional Hindu patriarchal society” (63). Therefore, the *sati*, torn between British imperialism and Indian patriarchy, has no voice. Quoting Lata Mani, Ross states that “within the discourse on *sati*, women are represented in two mutually exclusive ways: as heroines able to withstand the raging blaze of the funeral pyre or else as pathetic victims coerced against their will into the flames” (386). It seems that controversies around the notion of the *sati* are based on extremes and exaggerations. In the same manner, depicting Mrs. Sen, even though metaphorically, as the *sati* is an extreme and exaggerated statement especially if we compare her situation to that of Bibi’s.

“The Treatment of Bibi Halдар” is one of Lahiri’s short stories set in India. This part takes the reader to the India of Bibi, a sick woman who suffers from “an ailment that baffled family, friends, priests, spinsters, gem therapists, prophets, and fools” (83). Both of her parents died, and therefore she lives with the only family she has left, an elder cousin and his wife. The story is told by the women of the neighborhood. They are the neighbors that Mrs. Sen tells Eliot about. She says: “At home that’s all you have to do. Not everybody has a telephone. But just raise your voice a bit, or express grief or joy of any kind, and one whole neighborhood and half of another has come to share the news, to help with arrangements.” (63). Unlike Bibi’s own relatives, the women of the neighborhood are the only ones that are interested in helping her with everything they can.

Before the coldest weeks set in, we had the shutters of the storage room repaired and attached a sheet of tin to the doorframe so that she would at least have some privacy. Someone donated a kerosene lamp; another gave her some old mosquito netting and a pair of socks without heels. At every opportunity, we reminded her

that we surrounded her, that she could come to us if she ever she needed advice or aid of any kind. (89)

Bibi's condition left her unwanted as a wife. Therefore, no man in the area wants to marry her. When confronted by the neighborhood's housewives for his lack of interest in helping Bibi, her cousin announces: "what won't be cured must be endured. Bibi has caused enough worry, added enough to expenses, sullied enough the family name [...] besides, who would marry her?" (85). As for her cousin's pregnant wife, she believes that the "devil himself possessed her" (85) and therefore she must keep away from their unborn child. Based on superstition, Bibi is demonized and used a scapegoat by her family and patriarchy. On the other hand, the neighborhood's women show their solidarity when they boycott Halдар's shop and start buying their cosmetics from Bibi to encourage her with her small business. It is this kind of solidarity that Mrs. Sen keeps on highlighting when she describes India to Eliot.

Even though the story of Bibi Halдар matches Mrs. Sen's description of India at the level of solidarity and lending a hand to each other, Bibi's situation in India is different from that of Mrs. Sen. While the latter breaks down into tears because she does not have enough opportunities and occasions to wear her "saris" (67). Bibi Halдар wears "cracked plastic slippers and a housecoat whose hem stopped some inches below the knee" (83). Bibi's poor attire, however, is not the only aspect that renders her socially inferior to Mrs. Sen. She lives in a town where patriarchy rules over women. The issue here is that "The Treatment of Bibi Halдар" presents women, including Bibi, who believe in normative gender roles. Bibi's story is a critique of the stereotypical misogynist view of women and the role they are "supposed" to have in India's patriarchal caste system. Brainwashed by a patriarchal society, Bibi and the

neighborhood's women believe that she is sick because she cannot find a husband. They announce:

Each day she unloaded her countless privations upon us, until it became unendurably apparent that Bibi wanted a man. She wanted to be spoken for, protected, and placed on her path in life. Like the rest of us, she wanted to serve suppers. (83)

They relate success in life to marriage through which women gain social respect and acceptance in their community. Furthermore, Bibi believes that her sickness can only be cured once she is married. The story ends with a supposedly happy ending when she is raped by an anonymous man whose identity she refuses to reveal. The act of rape and assault is trivialized when the neighborhood's women find her "about four months pregnant" (88). They claim that "there was no point carrying out an investigation. She was, to the best of [their] knowledge, cured" (88). The ending, therefore, underlines the rape culture in India. In "Privilege and Double Standards Shape India's Rape Culture, Too", Max Bearak announces that "when a woman makes an accusation of rape or sexual harassment, the difficulties often multiply beyond the attack itself. She may be shunned. She may be blamed. She may be doubted" (1). It goes without saying that the ending does not represent all Indian men as rapists and all Indian women as fearful rape victims who refuse to report the crime to avoid social slut-shaming. As a matter of fact, women that come from a higher caste are more privileged and respected than men from a lower caste. Bibi Haldar, therefore, a woman that belongs to a lower caste is segregated by patriarchy and hierarchy. Evidently, she does not share Mrs. Sen's idealization of India.

If we go back to the comparison between Bibi and Mrs. Sen's situation, we notice that the latter's inability to have children is not as catastrophic as it is expected to be in such patriarchal societies. She is, therefore, socially superior to Bibi Haldar which further explains the two different versions of India. "In India", as Vijay Mishra puts it, "you are where you come from, and that may also mean the caste to which you belong, the family you married into and the social and economic grouping willing to embrace you" (4). Therefore, both women are not treated equally in their homeland. While one used to have a chauffeur in India, the other suffers from destitution. Bibi is "Othered" within her own community and in her own homeland. Poverty and superstition next to her sickness alienates her from her own people.

It seems that feelings of deterritorialization are not necessarily linked only to foreign lands. Home, as it appears, is where Bibi is marginalized. In this context Mishra claims that "the homeland of the diasporas are themselves contaminated, they carry racial enclaves, with inassimilable minorities and other discrepant communities, and are not pure, unified spaces in the first place" (5). The notion of home does not have the same definition and thus the same impact on individuals that belong to the same homeland. If we attempt to study these interior borders between individuals who supposedly belong to the same geographical space, we contend that social class and caste, defined by capital and money, are the main important factors in distinguishing between individuals in the same society or even across the globe. In spite of their different background, thus, Mrs. Sen and Bibi Haldar are both alienated. While the first is a diasporic subject because she is displaced from India, the second becomes diasporic at home even though she stays put. Thereby, we are inclined to rethink the promises of mobility. Who benefits from it, and at whose expense?

Considering the distinguishing conditions (cultural, financial, social or political) that set one diaspora apart from another, the latter do not share the same nostalgic image of a lost homeland. The effect of a lost home on the diasporic subject differs from one individual to another and especially from men to women. We notice that Mrs. Sen's diasporic state is not similar to her husband's. The latter is a university professor, moving to the U.S. provides him with the opportunity to develop his academic career as a scholar. Thus, crossing borders is obviously more beneficial to him than his wife who feels trapped in the new apartment. If we compare the impact of migration from India to the United States on Mrs. and Mr. Sen, we notice that while he is busy all day with work and research, Mrs. Sen is trapped in the new apartment feeling that she has sacrificed her past life in India to help him fulfill his dream and ambitions knowing that Mrs. Sen, unlike Bibi, used to enjoy a comfortable life back home.

As a matter of fact, the social difference between Mrs. Sen and Bibi Halder illustrates the fact that mobility is uneven because not all individuals have access to cross borders. Mrs. Sen moves with her husband to the U.S. as a result of the post-1965 brain drain movement. The immigration of the flight of human capital, meaning scholars, intellectuals, engineers and others who have received advanced training at their homeland, is further encouraged with the amendment of the Indian Citizenship Act of 1955 that allows Indian citizens abroad to retain dual citizenship (Mishra 3). It seems, therefore, that mobility is facilitated, to some individuals, in order to create as Mishra states "a thoroughly global world [where] the act of displacement now makes diasporic subjects travelers on the move" (4). These diasporic subjects, however, travel with the hope of bettering their lives. They have high expectations of what the other side has to offer. Nevertheless, once they realize that the new environment is not as it is imagined and promised, the diasporic subjects start reminiscing about the past and

the lost homeland. Mrs. Sen is one of the diasporic subjects whose expectations have been dashed. She announces: “they think I live the life of a queen Eliot [...] they think I live in a palace”(67). Mrs. Sen’s melancholic state, thereby, is based on the repetitive memories of India and the specters of the past. In the quote above, the spirit of her Indian neighbors and family haunt her with their expectations and thoughts. This is shown in the repetitive “they” as she breaks down in tears. What we notice here, however, is that because Mrs. Sen spends most of her time with Eliot, he becomes the interlocutor she confides in.

It seems that Mrs. Sen’s conversations with Eliot have a therapeutic impact on her. She trusts him not only with the memories in India but also with her unhappy present with Mr. Sen. I argue that Mrs. Sen plays the role of the patient while Eliot, the young boy, plays the role of the listener; in other words the therapist. When she asks him: “what do you think Eliot? Will things improve?” (64), he answers: “You could go places [...] you could go anywhere” (64). We notice that the patient-therapist relationship does not only affect Mrs. Sen in therapeutic ways but it has also an impact on the young boy and his perception of what surrounds him. I borrow two concepts from psychology, transference and counter-transference, to study the relationship between Eliot and Mrs. Sen. I argue that this patient-relationship is accurate to a certain extent. Influenced by Mrs. Sen, Eliot’s perception of his mother is based on a normative judgment of gender roles. Nevertheless, once we look deeper into his judgmental tone, we are inclined to wonder if these thoughts are really coming from an eleven-year old boy or the narrator.

### **Narration and Gender Normativity**

In *Classics in Psychoanalytic Technique*, Robert Langs opens his book with a study of Sigmund Freud's concept of transference<sup>11</sup> and counter-transference<sup>12</sup>. He underlines the importance of transference in the therapeutic process and contends that:

Clarifying the transference dimension of the patient's relationship to the analyst [is] perhaps the most fundamental of Freud's discoveries and a major stimulus for discussions of psychoanalytic technique [...] the recognition of transference proved to be the source of extensive insights into the nature of the analytic relationship and experience, and the key to the delineation of the analytic work necessary for the insightful, adaptive resolution of the patient's emotional disturbance. (30)

Since the act of transference, therefore, decides the patient-therapist relationship, Freud distinguishes between a positive transference and a negative transference. The first occurs when the patient projects positive thoughts, memories or even wishes onto the therapist. As a result, the therapist becomes a reminder of the patient's happy thoughts and thus the analyst gains the trust of his or her patient which helps immensely in the therapeutic process. The

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<sup>11</sup> The term was coined by Sigmund Freud in 1912. In psychoanalytic theory, transference occurs when a client (patient) projects his or her own problems onto their therapist. This projection creates a bond between the patient and the therapist which explains why some patients start to have feelings for their therapist.

<sup>12</sup> Counter-transference is a reaction to transference. The therapist who is the receiver of information, the listener to the patient's problems, takes an active part in the patient-therapist relationship and gets self-involved in the patient's personal issues. For example if a patient is experiencing an act of betrayal in their relationship with their partner and the therapist gets angry and shows his or her biased judgment on the matter, this is called counter-transference.



negative transference, however, happens when the patient projects negative thoughts from the past and especially from childhood memories onto the analyst. The latter, hence, becomes a reminder of what the patient fears, dislikes and mostly ignores. This disrupts the therapeutic process (Freud 1912). I focus on the positive transference here since it describes well the type of relationship between Mrs. Sen and Eliot. Langs states that Freud's examination of the positive transference shows that the bond between the patient and the analyst has many forms; it is not always based on libidinal love. In other words, the patient does not always trust the analyst just because she or he is falling in love with their therapist. Lang states that the love can be a sisterly, brotherly, fatherly or motherly and what all these different types of love have in common is the patient's dissatisfaction with reality and their belief that the therapist is the embodiment of what they are missing. He states:

If someone's need for love is not entirely satisfied by reality, he is bound to approach every new person whom he meets with libidinal anticipatory ideas. Thus it is perfectly normal and intelligible thing that the libidinal cathexis of someone who is partly unsatisfied, a cathexis which is held ready in anticipation, should be directed as well to the figure of the doctor [...] but the transference is not tied to this particular prototype: it may also come about on the lines of the mother-imago. (5)

Even though Eliot does not represent all the solutions to Mrs. Sen's problems and anxieties, he still manages to fill some gaps in her lonely reality. For this reason, they have built a relationship based on a reciprocal affection and trust. "By the time Eliot's mother arrived at twenty past six, Mrs. Sen always made sure all evidence of her chopping was disposed of [...] as he pressed the newspapers deeper into the garbage pail, Eliot felt that he and Mrs. Sen were

disobeying some unspoken rule’’ (64). It is in these small details we notice that young boy is willing to hide some truths from his mother to protect Mrs. Sen.

The bond between Eliot and Mrs. Sen explains the latter’s transference onto the boy. Robert Langs reminds us, that the act of transference is based mostly on projections. The patient forces their own psychological issues on the analyst which gives her or him the illusion of sharing these same issues with the person in front of them. The idea of having these issues as a common platform creates a bond between the patient and the therapist. In this context, Mrs. Sen projects her own issues on Eliot. She asks:

‘Do you miss your mother, Eliot, these afternoons with me?’ The thought had never occurred to him. ‘You must miss her. When I think of you, only a boy, separated from your mother for so much of the day, I am ashamed’.

‘I see her at night’.

‘When I was your age I was without knowing that one day I would be so far.

You are wiser than that, Eliot. You already taste the way things must be’. (66)

Mrs. Sen, thereby, projects her issues of alienation from home and from her mother onto Eliot who “understood that when Mrs. Sen said home she meant India, not the apartment where she sat chopping vegetables [...] he thought of his own home” (63). Eliot, therefore, reacts to Mrs. Sen’s transference and projections which influences his perception of his surroundings. This is what Sigmund Freud calls counter-transference. The term supposedly refers to the therapist who is emotionally entangled with his or her patient. Eliot, hence, influenced by Mrs. Sen who keeps comparing her present to her past, draws a similar comparison between her and his mother and her home and his house in order to meet him on that common platform where they both share feelings of alienation and loneliness.

Through counter-transference, Eliot constructs his projection on the basis of Mrs. Sen's normative view of gender models and gender roles. The situation of Eliot's mother shatters the stereotypical image of the white Western woman who is supposedly privileged in comparison to the Third World woman. She is as unhappy as Mrs. Sen but her problems are rather financial. Her struggle is shown in her attempts to support herself and her child. The electricity gets cut off frequently because she cannot pay the bill and "[they] had to bring a portable heater along whenever they moved from one room to another" (62) during cold nights. On the other hand, "Mrs. Sen's house was warm [...] the radiators hissed like a pressure cooker" (62). Therefore he unconsciously associates his mother with coldness and Mrs. Sen with warmth.

Moreover, Mrs. Sen is keen on cooking and she keeps telling Eliot stories about women and food in India which is very unfamiliar to the young boy since his working mother does not cook most of the time. Mrs. Sen's normative projection on gender models associates women with cooking. She declares: "whenever there is a wedding in the family, she told Eliot one day, or a large celebration of any kind, my mother sends out a word to in the evening for all the neighborhood women to bring blades just like this one, and then they sit in an enormous circle on the roof of our building, laughing, gossiping and slicing fifty kilos of vegetables through the night. (63) Eliot, therefore, compares Mrs. Sen who "split things in half, then quarters, speedily producing florets, cubes, slices, [and] could peel a potato in seconds (62) to his mother who orders food for him because ,due to her job, she does not have the time to prepare home-cooked meals. "The first thing she did when they were back at the beach house was pour herself a glass of wine and eat bread and cheese, sometimes so much of it that she wasn't hungry for the pizza they normally ordered for dinner. (64)

One might argue that Eliot's complaints about his cold house and the fact that he is not eating home-cooked meals are just the reflections of a young child who is not satisfied with his reality and this, therefore, has nothing to do with Mrs. Sen and her influence on him. I contend, however, that from the cognitive verbs assigned to him such as: "Eliot noticed" (61), "Eliot understood" (63), "Eliot learned" (65), we notice that the third person narrator has access to the young boy's consciousness. Furthermore, I argue that Eliot is used as a medium by the narrator to impose normative gender roles on his mother. "It was his mother, Eliot had thought, in her cuffed, beige shorts and her rope-soled shoes, who looked odd [...] and in that room where all things were so carefully covered, her shaved knees and thighs too exposed" (61). Eliot's moral judgment, thereby, reflects the thoughts of a conservative adult with a pointed ideology. This transference and counter transference illusion creates a tension between Mrs. Sen and Eliot's mother. The latter sees the babysitter as a menace for her son, stating that Eliot is a "big boy now" (70) who can take care of himself.

Eliot's mother shows her unwillingness to befriend Mrs. Sen through refusing to eat the food she offers her each time she picks up Eliot. Food is an important theme in Lahiri's writing. She writes about it in an article inspired by her real-life situation with her parents who give great importance to food and cooking. She declares:

As the end of each visit neared, our focus shifted from eating to shopping. My parents created lists on endless sheets of paper, and my father spent days in the bazaars, haggling, and buying by the kilo [...] into the suitcase went an arsenal of lentils and every conceivable spice, wrapped in layers of cloth ripped from an old sari and stitched into individual packets. In went white poppy seeds, and

resins made from date syrup, and as many tins of Ganesh mustard oil as possible.

(Lahiri 2000)

Cooking in the short story, however, seems to be a means to limit women to the kitchen which creates a normative view on gender models and roles. Eliot's mother, therefore, shows her disapproval of these ideals when she "refused a biscuit each time Mrs. Sen extended the plate in her direction" (61). We may see the importance of food in the short story as an aspect of the "sedative politics" of what Stanley Fish "boutique multiculturalism". In the essay "Multiculturalism Does Not Exist", Stanley Fish states: "Boutique multiculturalism is the multiculturalism of ethnic restaurants, weekend festivals [...] boutique multiculturalism is characterized by its superficial or cosmetic relationship to the objects of its affection" (378). In other words, food in this context is part of the superficial aspect of a culture that is celebrated at the expense of effective integration of immigrants and by effective integration I mean the participation in political life and in decision-making processes. One might ask, however, what does Eliot's mother have to do with this political stand? The celebration of multiculturalism is one of the premises of a diverse Americanness. Eliot's mother, nevertheless, illustrates the myth of such ideals. She illustrates the myth of the American dream, the infamous belief in changing one's future just by being in the United States. In *Multiculturalism: Success, Failure and the Future*, Will Kymlicka writes about the failure of multiculturalism in the sense that it celebrates cultural features of different ethnic communities but ignores the economic and political inequalities that these groups suffer from. He declares:

In much of the post-multiculturalist literature, multiculturalism is characterized as a feel-good celebration of ethnocultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music, and cuisine

that exist in a multiethnic society. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown calls this the “3S” model of multiculturalism in Britain — saris, samosas, and steel drums. (4)

If we study the characterization of Eliot’s mother closely, we notice that her rejection of Mrs. Sen is not based on hate or racism, for after all, she trusts Mrs. Sen to babysit her child. She refuses to celebrate the “exotic” features of the different ethnic groups, such as their food, clothes and lifestyle, because she is aware that what matters is the social class that is defined as it is, by money and capital. Her real issue, thereupon, is to survive on a daily basis to support her child. Therefore, when she realizes the type of lifestyle Mrs. Sen used to have in India, Eliot’s mother questions the act of immigration in the first place. Why did Mrs. Sen move to the United States?

Forced by traditions and customs that require wives to follow their husbands wherever they go, Mrs. Sen moves to the U.S. only to realize that it is not the place she has imagined it to be. Mr. Sen, a university professor, crosses borders and moves to the U.S. to better his lifestyle. Nevertheless, to Eliot’s mother, social improvement remains unattainable and exposes the idea of the American Dream as an ideological narrative to sedate a volatile class system. In fact, In *The Enduring Myth of the American Dream: Mobility, Marginalization, and Hope*, Heather Wyatt-Nichol contends that the American Dream is perpetuated to stabilize the division between the upper and lower social class. The poor are given the hope of achieving this dream so that they do not revolt against privileged businesses or citizens. She states:

The fact that the American Dream is completely out of reach for many citizens has the potential to expose the dream as myth. Nevertheless, the dream endures as a result of carefully crafted messages and a change in administrative direction.

By recasting the dream from one of individual responsibility to one that also incorporates collective responsibility, the role of Public Administration is extended. (15)

Aware of the myth of the American Dream, Eliot's mother believes that Mrs. Sen has been already privileged in India before she moved to the United States.

## Resistance, Class and Solidarity in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*

“For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power is rediscovered”

—Reina Lewis, *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (2)

The history of modern feminist movements shows that starting from the late nineteenth century up until the mid-twentieth century, the first and the second waves of feminism focused almost exclusively on the experiences of women from Western cultures. The two waves scored remarkable achievements relating to voting, equal pay and the removal of gender discrimination within the work place. However, by only addressing the needs and issues of white Western women, the two waves failed to include women of color and to account for the differences among women in terms of class and race. Therefore, the 1980s mark the emergence of the third wave of feminism as a response to the previous two. The third wave emerged to accentuate the diversity in each woman's lived experience.

In 1986, Chandra Talpade Mohanty analyzed the homogeneous and monolithic Western perception of third world women in her essay “Under Western Eyes”. The latter “offer[s] a critique of Eurocentrism and of Western developmentalist discourses of modernity, especially through the lens of the racial, sexual, and class-based assumptions of Western feminist scholarship” (10). In other words, Mohanty highlights the racial and class-based nuances that distinguish “third world” women from Western women. In doing so, she dismantles the stereotypes and the over-generalized racialized assumptions. She criticizes the



“too easy claiming of sisterhood across national, cultural, and racial differences” (12). Mohanty elucidates the fact that women of color have been excluded and misrepresented within the construct of a larger, general “sisterhood”. She provides an alternative for sisterhood, namely “solidarity”. The latter brings women together by respecting their differences and diversities.

Mohanty’s claim for solidarity stems from her project of creating an antiracist, anticapitalist and antiglobal feminism, a project she started working on twenty years after she wrote “Under Western Eyes”. She claims:

My concerns now focus on antiracist feminist engagements with the multiple effects of globalization and on building solidarities. I suggest that we reorient transnational feminist practice toward anticapitalist struggles, by examining feminist pedagogies and scholarship on globalization and by exploring the implications of the absence of racialized gender and feminist politics in antiglobalization movements. (12)

Hence, her subsequent essay, “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited” reorients the differences between Western feminism and Third World feminism towards anti-globalization feminist practices that resist gender inequity within the context of a growing globalization.

Both essays, and many others, are collected in her book *Feminism without Borders*. The latter is the key to analyze and read critically the lives of the women in Karen Tei Yamashita’s novel *Tropic of Orange*. The following chapter is divided into three major parts. First, it studies the stereotypes and the clichés used (on purpose or not) to misrepresent women in the novel. I argue that these stereotypes are at the center of the debate on transnational feminism. By underlining these stereotypes, the novel helps differentiating between Western

feminism and Third World feminism. Second, the chapter examines some aspects of Mohanty's project on solidarity by distinguishing between a "protocapitalist or "free market" feminism (6) and a "socialist feminism" (9). I contend that solidarity is crucial in resisting globalization. Therefore, the third and final part of the chapter asserts that regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or age, individuals turn into a commodity under the operative modes of a "deviant" or "criminal" globalization. Furthermore, I argue that deviant globalization works to maintain social, economic and political inequity across the globe.

### **Misrepresentations through Stereotypes and Clichés**

Before looking at stereotypes in *Tropic of Orange*, one ought to understand what a stereotype is and what effects it has on its subject. In "Stereotyping as a Signifying Practice", a section from *The Spectacle of the Other*, Stuart Hall examines stereotyping as an exercise employed to construct usually negative representations of individuals and groups. First, stereotyping must be distinguished from typing. Quoting Richard Dyer, Hall claims that "without the use of types, it would be difficult if not impossible to make sense of the world" (257). What are these types then? Types are used to refer to what surrounds us in the world, be it individuals, objects or abstracts. Types help us categorize our surroundings in a meaningful way. He claims:

We understand the world by referring individual objects, people or events in our heads to the general classificatory schemes into which—according to our culture—they fit. Thus we decode a flat object on legs on which we place things as a table. We may never have seen that kind of table before, but we have a general concept or category of 'table' in our heads, into which we fit the particular objects we perceive or encounter. (257)

With regard to people, we can classify them based on, for example, their roles as parents, children, workers, lovers and so on. Stereotyping, however, classifies people in the same manner by reducing them to these little or singular traits. By believing that these traits are natural and unchangeable, stereotyped individuals are framed within those limiting invariable characteristics. Hall examines stereotypes genealogically. Hence he explains how stereotyping deploys a strategy of “splitting”. The latter is used to put all those who do not fit the norms of the majority or a group of people in power in a category of “others”. He gives the example of Edward Said who examines in detail the othering process of the Orient by the West and how this mass stereotyping has given the West justifications to claim hegemony over the East. In the same manner, the western stereotypical assumptions of third world women reduce the latter to simplified and exaggerated traits such as uneducated victims, mostly veiled Muslims, who suffer from patriarchal abuse. Mohanty argues that women have been neglected in Said’s dichotomy of East versus West. This thesis, therefore, relies on Mohanty’s complementary addition to Said’s theory to shed light on women’s status within stereotypes and clichés.

In *Tropic of Orange*, Emi is seen as the western woman while Rafaela is depicted as the Third World woman who is being scrutinized “under the western eye”. The following part analyzes both characters by examining the stereotypes and clichés used to depict their characterization on different levels. First, the novel introduces Emi as a Japanese-American who works as a television news executive. She is an educated professional woman who is empowered by her job. It is Emi who finds out about the orange poisoning that might be caused by drug smuggling. On the other hand, Rafaela, a Mexican woman who has crossed borders into the United States searching for a better life, used to work in her husband’s janitorial business. After their separation, Rafaela goes back to Mexico and takes care of the

house of Emi's boyfriend and journalist Gabriel Balboa. It is important here to scrutinize the stereotypical contrast between Emi and Rafaela. While the first is depicted as a white collar Western woman, the second is presented through race, class, and her job as a domestic worker. In this context Mohanty states:

I argue that as a result to [...] homogenous notion of oppression of women as a group is assumed [...] produces the image of an "average third world woman" [...] (Read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition bound domestic, family oriented, victimized, etc). This, I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of western woman as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the freedom to make their own decisions.

(22)

Overgeneralizations and prejudices transform Third World women into victims who lack the power and the authorization to be independent, strong and have control over their bodies and their life choices, especially their sexual choices. It is factual to state that sexual subjects are still considered taboo in most Third world nations. However, one cannot overgeneralize this statement by attributing this fact to all non-western countries since the subject of sexuality has been moving from private discussions to public platforms on a daily basis. Thus, sexology as a field of study and a job is recognized in most Arab countries, especially in the North African ones. Nevertheless, it is through these generalizations and stereotypes that we familiarize the "unfamiliar". Hence, the Third World woman appears as a victim who has no control over her body and sexuality.

In this context, Emi appears to represent the Western woman who believes in these stereotypes through her superabundant attempts at detaching herself from the image of the

sexually submissive woman. She is the one who always initiates sexual talk in her conversations with Gabriel Balboa. “For god’s sake, she bit her lip. You make me so horny” (62), she says. Emi’s overuse of sexual allusions when she talks to Gabriel suggests that she tries to elude the stereotypical image of Third world women who are perceived as incapable of tackling sexual subjects. As a third generation Japanese American, she claims to have been assimilated as a Western woman. By distancing herself from the victimized camp of Third World women, she denies belonging to her Japanese origins, as she states “Maybe I am not Japanese, maybe I got switched in the hospital” (21). Her denial and refusal to be seen as “the stereotypical Asian woman” positions her on the other end of the spectrum. She still falls into the stereotype of the overly self-assertive woman who implicitly and unconsciously believes in the stereotype of the “docile” Asian woman. Her own belief in Asian stereotypes has caused an identity crisis in Emi’s characterization, for she “is so distant from the Asian female stereotype, it was questionable if she even had an identity” (19). Emi, one might suggest, tries to escape the stereotypical image that reduces women, and especially Third World women, to domesticity, obedience and motherhood.

On the other hand, Rafaela Cortez, an apparently stereotyped character who does not adhere to the stereotypical Third world women, is presented in the novel as the mother of Sol. Interestingly, Sol also means sun which makes her the mother of Sol and metaphorically linked to mother nature. Thus, one is inclined to raise the following question: Is she being exoticized or used as a national allegory? Rafaela is associated with the “earth”, with “nature,” as she nurtures Gabriel’s orange tree and shares her environment with “the iguana, the crab and the mouse, for example, [who] were always there” (3). Linked to nature, motherhood and the land, Rafaela seems to embody some of the stereotypes imposed on Third world women.

This is what Stuart Hall calls “splitting”. By assigning these simplistic and overly exaggerated traits to Rafaela, the novel differentiates her from Emi or the Western woman.

### **Solidarity: Feminism between Protocapitalism and Socialism**

In solidarity, individuals support each other without erasing their ethnic and racial diversity. Hence Mohanty states:

I define solidarity in terms of mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interest as the basis for relationships among diverse communities. Rather than assuming an enforced commonality of oppression, the practice of solidarity foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together. Diversity and difference are central values here—to be acknowledged and respected, not erased in the building of alliances. (7)

This is the opening paragraph of Mohanty’s essay: “On Solidarity, Decolonization, and Anticapitalist Critique” in which she underlines the importance of respecting and accepting diversity and difference. However, how is this diversity conceived in the novel given that the latter is written in the context of American multiculturalism? Emi, who thinks that “cultural diversity is bullshit” (128), criticizes the act of preserving the different “other” as exotic. It is valid here to refer to Said’s analysis of the colonial gaze. Said announces:

The Orient is watched, since its almost (but never quite) offensive behavior issues out of a reservoir of infinite peculiarity; the European, whose sensibility tours the Orient, is a watcher, never involved, always detached, always ready for new examples of what the *Description de l’Egypte* called “*bizarre jouissance*.” The Orient becomes a living tableau of queerness (Said 103).

Edward Said, therefore, criticizes the exotic perception of the Orient. The “exotic other” is not seen as an individual entity that is capable of acting, thinking and making decisions. For, he or she is seen as bizarre or grotesque and therefore their abnormality or “exoticism” lures the colonizer or the West to explore their bodies and their lands. Hence, the exotic gaze does not mean, in this context, seeing. Put simply, it is a matter of sight without insight and therefore Emi states: “you’re invisible. I’m invisible. We’re all invisible. It’s just ginger, raw fish and a credit card” (128). Emi, thereupon, criticizes the commodification of cultures whose value increases according to the degree of exoticism they are accorded. Furthermore, Emi’s critical opinion of multiculturalism in the United States can be explained by Lisa Lowe’s examination of the status of Asian Americans within the American multicultural contest. In *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, Lowe examines the contradictions of the American multicultural landscape concerning Asian Americans. The latter helped building the country’s economy, infrastructure, and education but had been excluded from citizenship by laws and acts until the 1940s. She states:

The history of the nation’s attempt to resolve the contradiction between its economic and political imperatives through laws that excluded Asians from citizenship—from 1790 until the 1940s—contributes to our general understanding of race as a contradictory site of struggle for cultural, economic, as well as political membership in the United States (1).

Lowe further contends that even after the 1940s when Asian Americans started to have the right to citizenship, “legal exclusion, disenfranchisement, and restricted enfranchisement of Asian immigrants” (1) still occurred. She links the failure of U.S. multiculturalism to ‘memory’ and ‘history’ that shows how Japanese Americans were detained in concentration

camps. The fact that the Japanese were once considered to be the enemy and therefore were held responsible for causing the Pearl Harbor attack still haunts Japanese Americans and deprives them of total integration and inclusion. This explains Emi's critical position in the restaurant scene. In a Sushi restaurant she gets into a heated disagreement with another woman who "happen[s] to adore the Japanese culture. [She] adore[s] different cultures. [She] traveled all over the world. [She] love[s] living in L.A. because [she] can find anything in the world to eat, right [there]. It's such a meeting place for all sorts of people. A true celebration of an international world" (128). As a response to the woman's speech, Emi asks for two forks from Hiro (the sushi maker), then she confronts the woman asking: "Would you consider using these in your hair? Or would you consider that, Emi paused, unsanitary?" (129). Once again, Said is relevant here since the fork vs. chopsticks example highlights how the other is seen as exotic and different but not necessarily a model to follow. The woman in the sushi bar may love eating with chopsticks or see Asian women using them for holding their hair, nevertheless she would not use a fork for the same purpose because according to her and her culture using utensils in someone's hair is "unsanitary". It is important then to admit that Emi does have a critical opinion on multiculturalism and 'celebrating' diversities in the U.S. She criticizes what Stanley Fish calls "boutique multiculturalism". Fish states:

Multiculturalism comes in at least two versions, boutique multiculturalism and strong multiculturalism. Boutique multiculturalism is the multiculturalism of ethnic restaurants, weekend festivals, and high profile flirtations with the other in the manner satirized by Tom Wolfe under the rubric of "radical chic". Boutique multiculturalism is characterized by its superficial or cosmetic relationship to the objects of its affection. Boutique multiculturalists admire or appreciate or enjoy



or sympathize with or (at the very least) “recognize the legitimacy of” the traditions of cultures other than their own; but boutique multiculturalists will always stop short of approving other cultures at a point where some value at their center generates an act that offends against the canons of civilized decency as they have been either declared or assumed (1).

The question that rises to the surface, however, is: what does Emi do after acknowledging the pitfalls of U.S. boutique multiculturalism? Considering that the latter reduces cultures and diversities to customs, does Emi develop a critical social analysis that would encourage her to act within a resisting group or is she nonchalant of the matter?

Emi’s individualistic understanding of U.S. multiculturalism can be juxtaposed to her grandfather’s, Manzanar Murakami. Emi’s grand-father shares her political stance on the failure of U.S. multiculturalist policies. He disappoints the expectations of his own community and is forced “[to] apologiz[e] profusely for this blight on their image as the Model Minority” (37). In spite of his community’s several attempts to “remove him from his overpass, from his eccentric activities [and] placate him with a small lacquer bridge in the Japanese garden in Little Tokyo, [Manzanar] was destined for greater vistas [...] he could not confine his musical talents to the silky flow of Koi in a pond, the constant tap of bamboo on rock or manicured bonsai” (37). His view of the Japanese “Koi”, “bamboo” and the “manicured bonsai” resonates with Emi’s view of the “tea, ginger [and] raw fish” (128). In other words, both Manzanar and Emi criticize these exoticized cultural values. The latter, according to them, are the chains that render them prisoners of a certain stereotypical image. However, in spite of their shared political views on multiculturalism, Emi does not share her grandfather’s beliefs in solidarity. Manzanar Murakami, a former surgeon now and a homeless

Sansei, conducts the traffic on the highway of LA with his silver baton. Through conducting, Murakami maps and re-maps the rhythmic flow of traffic that runs through the streets of Los Angeles.

He has the power to see through people. “He could see all of them at once, filter some, pick them out like transparent windows and place them even delicately and consecutively in a complex grid of pattern” (56). Murakami, who used to be a surgeon, moves from the literal operating room at the hospital to a larger metaphorical room of operation where citizens are the patients. He sees through these people and therefore he is able to see the diseases that cause their pain. He reaches out to other individuals. He is a doctor and he crosses borders which makes him symbolically a member of ‘Médecins Sans Frontières’ known in English as ‘Doctors without Borders’. The latter is an international humanitarian non-governmental organization through which doctors from all over the world volunteer to help conquer diseases especially in poor undeveloped or developing countries. The organization is based on solidarity that inspired Mohanty to work on her own notion of solidarity. She substitutes ‘doctors’ with ‘feminism’ and entitles her book *Feminism without Borders*. She states: “Why feminism without borders? First, because it recalls “doctors without borders”, an enterprise and project that embodies the urgency, as well as the internationalist commitment that I see in the feminist praxis” (1).

By crossing the frontiers of the hospital into the streets of L.A, Manzanar “imagined himself as a recycler. After all he, like other homeless in the city, was a recycler of the last rung. The homeless were the insects and scavengers of society, feeding on leftovers, living in residue, collecting refuse, carting in this way and that for pennies” (56). Homeless people, who have been marginalized by the other inhabitants of the earth, find refuge on the planet.

Home is no longer the “house” but it is what provides shelter when all odds stand against having that shelter. Murakami, among other homeless people, finds shelter outside mainstream society in a planetary space and for this reasons he criticizes:

The ordinary person [who] never bother[s] to notice, never bother[s] to notice the prehistoric grid of plant and fauna and human behavior, nor the historic grid of land usage and property, the great overlays of transport---sidewalks, bicycle paths, roads, freeways, systems of transit both ground and air, a thousand natural and man-made divisions, variations both dynamic and stagnant, patterns and connections by every conceivable definition from distribution of wealth to race (57).

Manzanar’s altruistic principles and responsibilities towards the other and the planet set him apart from Emi. While he crosses borders and transcends limits to lend a hand, Emi has a more individual approach. It is important to underline the fact that Emi is a third generation Japanese American. Thus, her political attitude can be explained by Mohanty’s reference to protocapitalism which is based on individualism. The latter is the result of the “Americanization” of the “I”. In other words, beliefs in ideals such as in the “American dream” strengthen feelings of individualism. This is why Mohanty states that “protocapitalist feminism [has a] profoundly individualist character” (6). Therefore, the generation gap between Manzanar and Emi highlights the influence of capitalism on younger generations who choose to let go of their cultural heritage and (self-) immerse themselves in the American culture to escape being labeled and judged as the different other. Emi who believes that multiculturalism is “bullshit” denies the fact that she has a Japanese heritage. This critique of the essentialist identity according to Mohanty has led to perceiving identity as “either naïve or

irrelevant rather than a source of knowledge and a basis for progressive mobilization” (6). Emi’s individualism, influenced by capitalist principles, sets her apart from Rafaela.

Rafaela Cortez is originally from Culiacan, Mexico. She married Bobby Ngu and lived with him in the U.S. However, throughout the present time and space of the novel, she is seen to live in Mexico with her son Sol. She leaves Bobby because she disagrees with him on political and ideological issues. She advocates for the rights of workers and especially women who are exploited under the rule of capitalism. This is one of the main reasons for her to leave Bobby. Unlike her, he believes in individual profit and self-protection rather than in taking care of others. While Bobby shares Emi’s individualistic trait, Rafaela, just like Manzanar, crosses borders in solidarity with others.

Rafaela fights and resists as the “*chicanas*” do who have moved to the U.S. either directly forced by their husbands or indirectly by the bad social or economic conditions at home. Most of the time, these women are not spoken of, just like Gabriel’s grandmother. “Nobody remembered the grandmother who supposedly came from right around there, a little girl who got kidnapped by the grandfather and taken away north” (6). However, the untold story of Gabriel’s grandmother is mirrored by Cleofilas’s story. In *Woman Hollering Creek*, Sandra Cisneros narrates the story of a Mexican girl who gets married and moves with her husband (Juan) to Texas. Isolated in a house with no near neighbors or community and without any independent means of transportation, Cleofilas is trapped in a confined space where she is beaten by the husband. She endures all the pain for the sake of her son (Juan Pedrito), because she believes that “one does whatever one can, must do, at whatever the cost” (55). Rafaela, thus, challenges the story of the ‘chicanas’ as perpetual victims by being independent and powerful, for “in eight years [...] she had learned English, married Bobby,

helped start their janitorial business, bore a baby, and got a degree at the local community college” (6). She is engaged, hence, in helping others, herself, and her own family, especially Sol.

In order to protect herself and Sol, Rafaela crosses borders again to go back “home” to Mexico. Once in Mexico, Rafaela examines her surroundings and thereby starts to question the very essence of home as a concept. She who was active in the workers union in L.A finds out that the unfair and unequal working conditions for women are even worse in Mexico. Rafaela scrutinizes the difference between Lupe and Donna Maria. “Lupe did everything on Dona Maria’s place. Lupe cleaned, cooked, gardened, planted, and harvested. She fed the chickens, collected eggs, fattened the pigs and slaughtered them when the time came” (117). Lupe and Donna Maria exemplify Mohanty’s claim on class difference between women, even when they share the same geographical and cultural space because “practices that characterize women’s status and roles vary according to class” (30). Hence, the western perception of third world women as a homogeneous entity is further dismantled. Capital decides rank and class and is a differentiating element in defining the status of women.

Rafaela further deconstructs the illusion of home once she is directly confronted with danger in Mexico. It is in the sections “The Cornfield” and “To the Border” that Rafaela comes face to face with Donna Maria’s son (Hernando). This incident pulverizes Rafaela’s utopian illusion of home. She finds herself trapped in a situation where she fights for the life of her son who is in danger of being kidnapped by a transnational organization that traffics children’s organs. Thus, in “What’s Home Got to Do with It?”, Mohanty states that “ ‘being home’ refers to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; ‘not being home’ is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety” (90).

Rafaela deconstructs the utopian illusion of a safe home once she concludes that danger has become global. What's globalization have to do with it?

### **Globalization between mainstream and deviance:**

The following section of this chapter studies the phenomenon of globalization by differentiating between mainstream globalization and deviant globalization. In order to capture the distinction between the two, one must start by defining each concept separately. In *Deviant Globalization: Black Market Economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Nils Gilman, Jesse Goldhammer, and Steven Webber assert that globalization eludes a single definition for it has many complex facets. However, in a simplified close definition of the concept, one might define “globalization as the cross-border integration of value added economic activity. This integration happens because the core ingredients of economic activity—goods, services, money, people, and ideas, in no particular order—have become increasingly mobile across space, time, and political boundaries” (6). Globalization, then, is linked to mobility and crossing boundaries, be they geographical, cultural, political or economic ones. This has created a romantic and utopian perception of the phenomenon among mainstream critics. For example, Gilman, Goldhammer and Webber argue that “much of this romantic utopianism was concentrated in some popular contemporary analyses that appeared in the 1990s and soon became hackneyed buzzwords: ‘The End of Geography’, ‘The Death of Distance’, ‘The End of History’, ‘The Network Society’, and above all, Tom Friedman’s cliché of the decade, ‘The World is Flat’” (8). Mainstream globalization has painted a world where space and time are compressed and thereby individuals cross all kinds of borders easily and, most-importantly, for “free”. Enthusiasts of mainstream globalization, however, ignore the fact that hypermobility across the world has facilitated the cross-border illegal trades in organs, sex,

drugs and so on. Dystopian Critics of the utopian version of globalization elucidate its deviant side. Gilman, Goldhammer, and Webber throw light on the fact that “deviant globalization is inextricably linked to and bound up with mainstream globalization. Both are market-driven economic activities. Both are enabled by the same globally integrated financial, communication and transportation systems. Both break down boundaries—political, economic, cultural, social, and environmental— in a dynamic process of creative destruction” (2). Thus, underneath the romantic and utopian representation of globalization, the latter’s deviant and criminal side operates with illegal means. The deviant side of globalization is portrayed in *Tropic of Orange* through organ and drug trafficking. Once in Mexico, Rafaela faces a transnational organ-trafficking organization led by Donna Maria’s son Hernando. She gets trapped in a situation where she fights for the life of her son this criminal business across the American continent, from Mexico to the U.S, from south to north. The questions that arise, however, are why and how? The Dutch nephrologist, Frederike Ambagtsheer explains that:

The problem is: organs are just like women, weapons and drugs. There is demand in this world. People are ill; they want an organ and there is supply. There are poor people in this world who are desperate [...] and sell their organs in order to feed their children. Unfortunately demand and supply come together too often in this world (72).

Demand and supply therefore have created a black market of organ trafficking. Individuals are either forced by poverty to sell their organs or they are kidnapped and mostly murdered. The black market, hence, becomes a linking medium between the poor/the victims and the rich/the buyers. “According to the Coalition for Organ Failure Solutions, the level of compensation donors receive for their kidneys varies by region. In South Africa, living donors

are said to receive only 700\$” (77), while the same kidney is bought for 30.000\$ in the United States, taking into consideration the fact that “patients pay ten times the amount that donors receive” (77). The illegal organ trade is global and involves many countries. The following part examines the ways through which black marketeers cross borders to buy/obtain and deliver/sell organs.

Organ trafficking markets cross borders from south to north which exemplifies the deviant side of globalization and unveils the illegal and criminal acts that work and travel through the vehicle of laws and agreements such as NAFTA<sup>13</sup>. With a borderless economy, organ and drug trafficking manages to maintain their illegal business. Drugs that have been injected into oranges are transported from south to north, causing the death of many people in L.A. Therefore, danger is not linked to one certain geographical space. On the contrary, danger becomes global and it dismantles the utopian imagination of a safe home. Instead, home becomes a dystopic place. The latter starts to lose its meanings when it is no longer familiar. It is through the defamiliarization of home that Rafaela apprehends that danger is global and it affects individuals regardless of their gender, ethnicity, race or age.

Regardless of their differences, Emi, Manzanar, and Rafaela are exposed equally to the dangers of globalization. The criminal acts become the center to which all characters are

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<sup>13</sup> The North American Free Trade Agreement is a transnational treaty that includes Canada, the U.S and Mexico. The aim behind Nafta is the elimination of economic barriers. Therefore, investments in the three mentioned countries are facilitated in a borderless context. This trade, I argue, has opened borders not only for multinational investing companies but also for corrupted and criminal organizations that are involved in sex, organs and drugs trafficking. These organizations benefit from the open borders in a sense that their shipments move from South to North and vice versa easily.



linked. This can be read through the structure of the novel itself. Yamashita weaves a web that links all characters to each other. The web is woven horizontally which can be read as a microcosm of the global landscape where vertical relationships are substituted by a system where individuals are linked to each other through services that they give to each other. Put simply, within the system every individual has a role to play and a service to give. The map through which Yamashita introduces the characters in the novel is very similar to the home screen of the Iphone. These characters are objectified within the context of a deviant globalization that operates similarly to the Iphone's screen where the apps, just like the characters of the novel, are situated one next to the other horizontally and on a common platform to serve a specific task. This means that regardless of their differences, they are all facing the same danger. In opposition to deviant globalization, the characters are brought together in solidarity against the transnational criminal organizations.

### **Resistance**

Since the moment the orange fell, the space between north and south has been collapsing gradually. The Tropic of Cancer has moved towards the north "ever since the orange—that orange—had disappeared" (149). Murakami, conducting within a moving planet, manages to lead a riot. The solidarity among the citizens of L.A marks a mass revolution. Regardless of their different backgrounds, these individuals stand together as a solid group. "The entire City of Angels seemed to have opened its singular voice" (238). The moment people rose their 'branches', 'pencils', 'toothbrushes' or 'carrot sticks' and started to become conductors of their own, marks the birth of mass resistance against the chaos, against the poisoned oranges that have caused death and accidents. Manzanar who "looked like a priest blessing a multitude, interminably" (175), appreciates this "kind of solidarity: all seven

millions residents of Greater L.A. out on the town, away from their homes, just like him, outside” (206).

As the novel unfolds, the characters start to realize the misconducts of capitalism and its impact on poor individuals. In a conversation with Arcangel, Rodriguez says that his son believes that “poor people are doomed to work to their deaths. That we eat and drink all our earnings because anyway we will die” (143). Rodriguez protests, however: “but I am not working to die [...] I work to live!’ He looked as if he would cry. ‘All these years with the little I earn, I worked for my children to live” (143). These are the people who become victims of transnational capitalism. In Mexico, Arcangel is astonished when an authentic Mexican restaurant serves only burgers and fries with American beers. “For a moment”, says Arcangel, “the north has come south” (132). “It was true. Arcangel looked around at all the hungry and miserable people in the cantina— all eating hamburgers, Fritos, catsup, and drinking American beer” (131). This is how borderless capitalism turns these nation states into markets of consumption. Capitalism lives on these individuals; they are both the cheap labor and the market. Moreover, the expensive faucets that Gabriel sends from Los Angeles to his house in construction in Mazatlan are made in Mexico. The merchandise, thereby, is made in Mexico and sold in the U.S. at a price that those who construct it cannot afford. It is this unfair distribution of wealth that pushes immigrants to cross borders with the hope of bettering their conditions. The American dream, nevertheless, is but a myth. The people who have been to the U.S. advise Arcangel who disguises himself as an old man:

“In the name of the Virgin of Guadalupe, go back old man. Do you have a green card? Do you have a social security card? Do you have money? When you get there, you will be unprotected. If you get sick, no one can give you care. If you

have children, no one will teach them. In the name of Tonantzin and the memory of Juan Diego, go back! You are illegal”.

“Is it a crime to be poor? Can it be illegal to be a human being?”

The crowd behind him agreed. They chanted, “Is it a crime to be poor? Is it a crime to be poor?” (211)

People start to realize that the other side of the border is not the heaven they imagined it to be. Ideals such as the American dream and the celebrations of multiculturalism are but banners to promote the opening of borders which works mostly in favor of multinational capitalist corporations. And “who knows what’s crossing to the other side?” Arcangel contemplates, “gifts from NAFTA” (161). It is this awareness among people that lead to the rise of a riot.

The resistance in the novel overwhelms the ending. Since the book belongs to the magical realism<sup>14</sup> genre, the resistance against NAFTA, capitalism and the deviant side of globalization is imagined in a championship where Arcangel, transformed into a superhero, calls himself “*El Gran Mojado*”, fights “Supernafta” in a battle in an auditorium where individuals from L.A and Mexico have come to the borders to witness “*El Contarto Con*

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<sup>14</sup> Magical realism is a style of fiction where the author portrays a realistic image of the real world while adding a touch of magic, surrealism and mythology. Adding supernatural elements to the mundane world make of the genre strange and surreal. In *Magical Realism and the Search for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki*, Mathew Strecher describes magical realism as “what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe” (2). The genre is often and mostly related to Latin American Literature.

*America*". The battle speaks for the Zapatista<sup>15</sup> movement in Mexico in a surreal way. El Gran Mojado symbolizes the resisting force against the open borders, capitalism and the encroaching upon the Mexican territories, markets and culture. In the battle, Supernafta tries to lure the mass into surrender by offering them twelve percent of the profit. "How about twelve percent", announces Supernafta, "you don't think twelve percent is enough? Look at it this way. What's twelve percent of a billion dollar? One hundred twenty million! That's multimillions. And it's not lottery. It's your cut. [...] that's progress working for you. My opponent doesn't want progress. He doesn't care about the future [...] Think about it. Before any one of you can be truly free, you need to have enough money to do what you want" (257). We notice that Supernafta's speech is based solely on the power of money and the omnipresence of capitalism. He links human rights such as freedom to the necessity of money owning. His discourse is economic, pragmatic and based on false promises of a better future which resonates with ideals such as the American dream. El Gran Mojado responds to this announcing:

Noble people, I speak to you from the heart  
[...] you who live in the declining and abandoned places  
of great cities, called barrios, ghettos, and favelas:  
What is archaic? What is modern? We are both.  
The myth of the first world is that  
development is wealth and technology progress.

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<sup>15</sup> The Zapatista National Army of National Liberation is a far-left socialist political and militant group that resist against transnational capitalism. The group declared war against the state of Mexico and holds an important territory in Chiapas Mexico.

It is all rubbish.

It means that you are no longer human beings  
but only labor.

It means that the land you live on is not earth  
but only property.

It means that what you produce with your own hands  
is not yours to eat or to wear or shelter you  
if you cannot buy it.

El Gran Mojado criticizes the capitalist system that encroaches upon the rights of poor individuals to maintain its profits. The misconducts of capitalism and globalization, therefore, have led to the emergence of a resisting group of individuals. Manzanar “found himself at the heart of an expanding symphony of which he was not the only conductor” (238).

The rise of the people, regardless of their differences, against the corruption of capitalism and the deviant side of globalization can be seen as the rise of the “Multitude” against “Empire” in the terms of Antonio Ngeri and Michael Hardt. The term Multitude has a historical background. It was first coined by Machiavelli to refer to a population that has not been involved in a social contract with a political body. These populations are mostly determined to maintain their own political sovereignty instead of belonging to another. According to Hobbes, the multitude is a mob that needs to enact a social contract with the monarch to become people instead of remaining a multitude. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt revisit and redefine the term in their book *Empire* and its sequel *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. Both cultural theorists define the Multitude as a resisting force against the misconducts of Empire and the failure of global democracy. Empire as it has

been defined in the previous chapter, is a network of multinational organizations that function together to maintain their economic sovereignty. Empire, they insist, does not have a center of power that is clear and obvious. Different from Imperialism, Empire does not have clear borders between center and peripheries. Therefore, in the age of globalization, Empire is scattered across the world where dominant nation-states impose their economic sovereignty on weaker countries. The Multitude, thereby, is a resisting force against Empire, through which Hardt introduce solutions to achieve global democracy. In an attempt to scrutinize the deviant side of globalization, we notice that it is inevitable to say that there is an unfair wealth distribution across the world because economic hegemony differs from one nation to another. We notice, however, that in the midst of the criminal act of the deviant side of globalization such as the drug trafficking business, capital moves throughout the borders and shifts from dominant nation states to weaker ones. In this context, Nils Gilman, Jesse Goldhammer, and Steven Weber announce:

Deviant globalization not only often entails harrowing individual suffering, but it can also provide money and power to self-dealing government officials, brutal warlords, and financial terrorists. Mexico illustrates this dynamic well. Meeting Western appetites for illicit drugs has generated vast fortunes south of the American border. This money pays for an army of employees that, by some estimates, numbers upward of half a million people, larger than the entire Mexican oil and gas industry. It pays for the development of rural Mexican towns and villages that, thanks to generous drugs lords, now have everything from running water to computers and broadband internet access (4).

This explains, to a certain extent, why master criminal drug dealers such as Pablo Escobar are popular among the people. They embody the figure of “Robin Hood”, the people’s hero who steals from the rich and gives to the poor.

In *Deviant Globalization Black Market Economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Nils Gilman, Jesse Goldhammer, and Steven Weber put forward a bold claim by stating that “deviant globalization is in the process of changing the landscape and distribution of power in the world economy”(4). According to these critics, there is no justification of the criminal acts of deviant globalization but they argue that the latter is not the main and initial problem. The phenomenon must be understood and examined from an objective perception. In other words, morals must be detached from studying it. According to Gilman, Goldhammer, and Webber, moral judgments that affect laws are one of the main reasons why deviant black markets came into existence in the first place. They ask: “What creates this market opportunity? We do! When we codify and institutionalize our moral outrage at selling sex by making prostitution illegal, for example we create a market opportunity for those who would kidnap women and smuggle them into sexual slavery”(3). Thereby, by detaching morals from looking at the subject, one might assert that deviant globalization can be also seen as a way and means through which poor communities react to unfair wealth distribution. Thus, one is inclined to affirm that deviant globalization is used by dominant nation states to maintain their economic sovereignty and also by poorer nation states that aspire to change the way wealth is distributed throughout the world. This is obviously not the solution to tackle the misconducts of the Empire. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, state that while we attempt to resist against the Empire, we should not condemn globalization as a phenomenon. Put simply, while resisting against the undemocratic side of globalization we need to seek solutions that are equally

global instead of reinforcing national sovereignty as an opposition to the global form. On a global level, the two theorists construct three solutions that would operate as alternative political strategies to the notion of the Empire. They introduce the right to global citizenship which would allow all individuals around the world to travel freely with the right to live and work in any country they choose, the right to a social wage and a basic citizenship income and third, the right to control the means of production which means the right to have an equal control over machines, technology and knowledge.

The novel ends with the death of Supernafta and El Gran Mojado. It seems that it sheds light on the importance of sacrifice and courage to overcome the corruptions of the system. The death of Emi, however, is important to demonstrate the difference between resisting within a community and resisting alone. Different from Emi, Rafaela manages to face Supernafta and ends up conquering it. She saves her son from the danger of the organ trafficking organization. On the other hand, Emi gets shot while sunbathing on the news van in the middle of the riot. We notice here that the notion of solidarity and its importance in resisting global danger is underlined. Individuals, regardless of their different backgrounds, must stand together to face these global dangers. It is Arcangel who takes care of Sol when Rafaela fights Supernafta. And it is Gabriel Balboa who calls bobby to inform him about the championship where Sol would be with Arcangel. Therefore, the solidarity in the novel is based on a network on individuals who help each other. This web of solidarity comes as a reaction to a web of corruption. For this reason, Hardt and Negri call for a global solution to a global crime.



## **Conclusion**

In the age of globalization, it goes without saying that immigration is one of the most important phenomena of our contemporary world. Due to open borders, capital, information, ideas, individual and therefore cultures travel throughout the world. Consequently, the demarcation of borders is continuously challenging the national identity. Nation states, are dwindling in the face of neoliberal policies of open global market. Globalization, a multifaceted concept, is both celebrated and lamented. Celebratory readings of the phenomenon, promote for the openness between the local and global for the sake of a larger economic market. On the other hand, critics of globalization underline its deviant side. Through the same open borders, corrupt multinational organizations use the global as a vehicle to transport drugs, organs and women.

Under the reign of globalization, it seems that the world becomes a web through which all these multinational organization compete and work with each other. During post modernism, theorist of globalization such as Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, explain the phenomenon in contrast to previous political regimes. They announce that globalization or Empire as they call it, is different from imperialism and colonization when it comes to marking the borders between the oppressor and the oppressed. While European nations highlighted the borders between the West and East, globalization has merged both camps together. A lot of reading and discourses around globalization sees the phenomenon as the Americanization of the world. This statement set the U.S. as the center of economic hegemony. We notice, however, that after the 9/11 incident, this statement is blinkered. The image of the U.S. as the most powerful nation is questioned. With the rise of other powerful

economies such China and India, the economic landscape of post-globalization era is changing.

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